

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

13 JULY 2023

COUNCILLOR BAL ANOTA

CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY & CORPORATE SERVICES

For the period 13th July to 24th August 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Management and maintenance of council owned property assets: including industrial estates, King's Court, Town Hall and The Depot, Public Conveniences, Crematorium and Cemeteries

Since the last Council meeting in July, I have the following to report:

- **Tour of Hunstanton commercial property interests :**

I have now managed to have a walkabout in Hunstanton with the Assistant Director for Property & Projects and have been briefed on the wide array of property interests owned, or leased, by the borough council which includes the fun fair, two caravan park sites, the Sea Life Centre (site only), promenade kiosk sites, and large swathes of public open spaces and Pay & Display car parks.

Linking into the above I also attended Corporate Performance Panel on 24th July where a report on the council's promenade kiosk tenants, and their compliance with regulations in respect of fats & oils, trade waste, and waste water disposal was considered. The report outlined that some of the kiosk tenants may not be complying strictly with the regulatory requirements, nor the terms of the leases they have with the council as their landlord. The teams working within my portfolio, and other teams within the council such as Waste & Recycling and Environmental Health, assured the Panel that they will keep pressing to ensure that the tenants comply with the relevant requirements, and one potential breach is currently under investigation.

- **Tour of retail property investments :**

I have not yet had the chance to have a look at this part of my portfolio yet, however, our exposure to this sector is relatively low, which from a property investment perspective is reassuring, however, I do recognise that the retail centre is important for King's Lynn particularly, and we hope that some of the current suite of projects, such as Town Deal, will help to increase footfall and strengthen the town centre in the longer term.

- **King's Court**

We have been looking at some minor improvements to our main operational office building King's Court, and I am pleased to report that a shower facility has been installed on the second floor near to the canteen which will hopefully encourage more staff, and maybe even councillors, to cycle to work which will obviously help contribute to reducing our carbon footprint.

Other works in the pipeline include: new handrails to the main stairwell, and some air-cooling in the canteen area to provide a cooler place to sit in the hotter months of the year which will contribute to the health and well-being of our staff. We are also potentially reducing the accommodation occupied by the Integrated Care Board (formerly the West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group) in order to bring back into the building some council teams that were displaced into outlying sites during the Covid Pandemic.

- **Cemetery provision**

I have been made aware that cemetery provision within King's Lynn has two main issues: capacity and the high-water table. We need to start work on a feasibility study identifying how we can address this. I have asked for a Project Brief to be developed between the relevant teams. I am hoping to report on progress later in the year. I anticipate that this could be a challenging project, but also an important one.

- **King's Lynn Innovation Centre (KLIC)**

Since the last Council meeting the KLIC building was unfortunately attacked by vandals as well as the speculative commercial units that the council has constructed on the Nar Ouse Enterprise Zone, and some private property in the South Lynn area. Insurance claims are being processed, and we are reviewing the security aspects of the building.

What is pleasing is that the CCTV team managed to track the vandals through the town and ultimately arrests were made.

- **Commercial Rent Arrears**

The Property & Projects team have been working hard to recoup all of the outstanding rent arrears that have arisen over the past few years, mainly owing to the Covid Pandemic. Unfortunately, one tenant has ceased trading and returned the keys to the premises that they occupy. The team tried to resolve the issues and offered fairly lengthy repayment plan options, however the operator decided that they could not commit to this and ceased trading.

Only one commercial tenant has not committed to a repayment plan for the debt they owe. The Property & Projects team is now in the process of taking more formal action for the recovery of the debt. I will update councillors later in the year on progress.

Management of other council assets including (but not limited to) car parking matters, CCTV

Heacham	2022	3669	3150	4596	6129	17544	
	2023	3404	3647	4239	3836	15126	
						-2418	86%
Hunstanton	2022	35535	31677	37938	50833	155983	
	2023	35147	34330	38475	37567	145519	
						-10464	93%
Kings Lynn	2022	107252	112278	110694	114095	444319	
	2023	114187	156736	111451	122645	505019	
						60700	114%

Whilst it is pleasing to see King’s Lynn numbers continue to hold their own above last year, it is clear to see how the prolonged period of poor weather has impacted visitors to the coastal areas

CCTV

Over the last few weeks, I have managed to see first-hand the work of our CCTV operators and how they respond to incidents around the clock, not just to keep the residents of west Norfolk safe but to support our staff in times of need as well. No matter what job you do, you deserve to be able to go about it without fear of violence, so when one of our parking staff was threatened whilst undertaking their patrols it was good to see how quickly help arrived being coordinated by our CCTV operators liaising with the police. This collaborative working was never so evident, as, after a spate of vandalism in the regeneration area, where real-time reviews of the local CCTV allowed the police to apprehend several suspects within minutes of the incident. These are just two examples of how public bodies are far more effective working together, I would like to personally thank our CCTV operators and the west Norfolk policing teams for their collective efforts in bringing these matters to a speedy resolution.

Parks and Open Spaces

West Norfolk parks was among hundreds of parks across the country taking part in Love Parks Week. Five of our parks and green spaces were awarded the Green Flag for the positive impact they have in our communities in west Norfolk. Love Parks Week gives us the opportunity to celebrate the fantastic Parks and green spaces we have here in West Norfolk this event run from 28th July to 6th August

There were almost 300 runners in the Walks to take part in the special run to celebrate Love Parks Week. Lots of runners travelled from far and wide to come to this event.

We had some wonderful comments on the Walks park and the comms team posted a couple of videos to our social media channels that have been viewed over 2000

times, I would personally like to thank all the teams who made this event a success.

Health and Safety – property and buildings

I am pleased to report that we have now allocated some funding within the Capital Programme to address a particular issue with an abandoned vessel at Boal Quay that has become increasingly problematic with children getting into the boat known as the Tosca barge. The team has looked at several options, including selling it for scrap metal, however, owing to the type of paint used on the hull, and elsewhere on the boat, we need specialists to dismantle the structure and dispose of it at an appropriate waste site. I am hoping that we can get rid of this potential hazard as soon as possible, however, the surrounding area is quite sensitive in respect of ground nesting birds and watercourses so this project may not be started until later in the calendar year.

Policy relating to land and property acquisition and disposal and Implementation of acquisition and disposal of land and property

At the time of writing this report the proposed sale of land to the NHS for a health facility on the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area has not been finalised. I understand that the NHS has yet to make its final decision in mid-August. I am hoping that now the chosen site has achieved planning permission there will be a positive outcome. I am also hoping to be able to verbally update councillors at our Council meeting in August.

I have asked that the Property & Projects team to progress matters with the two potential development sites that I mentioned in my previous report to Council. The team will submit planning applications and, if planning permission is secured, market the sites on the open market.

Note this Administration has ambitions to deliver a number of projects during its term and capital receipts will be extremely important.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

- Tour of the Depot and maintenance team
- Tour of retail property investments
- Property Assets Meeting
- Meet & greet – David Ousby and Team
- West Norfolk Parking Strategy Briefing

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Monday 3rd July – Planning Committee
Tuesday 4th July – Finance Portfolio Meeting
Wednesday 5th July – Mintlyn Crematorium Visit
Wednesday 5th July – Cabinet Briefing
Friday 7th July – Portfolio Meeting - Matthew Henry
Friday 7th July – Portfolio Meeting – Martin Chisholm
Tuesday 11th July – Portfolio Meeting – Matthew Henry
Monday 24th July - Corporate Performance Panel
Wednesday 26th July – Property Assets – Oliver Judges
Tuesday 1st August – Catch-up – Leader
Tuesday 1st August – Cabinet
Wednesday 2nd August – Cabinet Briefing
Thursday 3rd August – Portfolio Meeting – Martin Chisholm
Friday 4th August – NCC Briefing Town Deal
Friday 4th August – Portfolio Meeting – Matthew Henry
Monday 7th August – Meet & Greet – Debbie Gates and Team
Monday 7th August – Portfolio Meeting - Matthew Henry
Tuesday 8th August – LGA Support Session